

CHAPTER I

"Evil" Senators Responsible for World War II

On January 15, 1945, shortly after President Roosevelt had delivered his annual message on the state of the Union and the world, a memorable debate on American policy occurred in the Senate of the United States—that great national forum for the free and uncensored discussion of public affairs. In the course of the debate Senators reviewed the historical backgrounds of the global war then raging, referred to the actions and ambitions of foreign governments, including Russia and Great Britain, and drew into question some of the principal foreign projects advocated by President Roosevelt. Throughout the controversy, the tension which usually marks blunt exchanges of views in the chamber was kept taut by a realization of the fact that in the coming months the Senate would be compelled to act upon the treaties and laws designed to fix the policy of the United States in and for a world of contentious nations.

On this occasion, the task of upholding the Administration in respect of certain issues was undertaken by Senator Claude Pepper of Florida. Mr. Pepper had long been a defender of President Roosevelt's domestic and foreign policies, if sometimes a dissenter in matters of detail. A graduate of the University of Alabama, trained in law at Harvard University, an experienced debater, with nearly ten years' service in the Senate behind him, Mr. Pepper ranked high among his Democratic colleagues in learning and dialectical skill. Moreover, he was a vigorous supporter of the internationalism to which President Roosevelt was committing the

1. Here and in the following pages the term *internationalism* is used as meaning: World peace is desirable and possible; it is indivisible and can be secured for the United States only by entering into a positive connection with a league, or association, of nations, empowered to make pacific adjustments of international conflicts and to impose peace, by effective sanctions or by force,

Government of the United States and he assumed the burden

of championing it amid a cross fire of sharp criticism.

In his efforts to sustain his cause against challenges from the opposition, Senator Pepper arraigned the Senate itself at the bar of moral judgment: "It was not on the battlefields of Flanders that the last war and its victory of peace were lost, but in this Chamber."

Immediately after Senator Pepper had launched his indictment

Mr. Millikin [of Colorado]. Mr. President, I challenge that statement, and I should like to have a demonstration of it.

Mr. Pepper. History demonstrates it.

Mr. Millikin. Mr. President, I do not care about the Senator's notions of history. I think that is a terrible accusation to make against this country and against this Senate. . . . In what way was the peace of the world lost on the floor of the Senate? Let us have a demonstration of it.

Mr. Pepper. Very well. It was because, in my humble opinion, the Senate failed to ratify the Treaty of Versailles and to provide for our part in the League of Nations. . . .

Mr. Millikin. . . . Will the Senator demonstrate how, if we had been in the League of Nations, any decisions would have been different than those which were made?

Mr. Pepper. I will tell the Senator how I think they would have been different. I think the United States at the conclusion of the last war had the moral leadership of the world. . . . I believe the United States in a world-wide organization would have brought to its councils not only great moral leadership, great physical power, and great natural resources and their strength, but a moral elevation, if you please, and personal disinterestedness which the nations of the Old World do not have. I think we could have brought to bear upon those councils influences without which they disintegrated into a bickering, fighting lot of Old World powers, as they have always been. . . .

After the Senate failed to ratify the Treaty of Versailles, including provision for the League of Nations, it did not even

on aggressors or peace breakers; the United States cannot maintain neutrality in case of any major war among European and Asiatic powers.

take up the pact to make secure the frontiers of France. We abandoned our allies. We abandoned our objectives. We abandoned our dead. We waited for the next war to come.

That is why I say that if America had taken an affirmative part, at least the probability is that we might have avoided the war which has come to curse this generation.

Mr. Millikin. Mr. President, will the Senator agree with me that the war might have been prevented had France, which had the best and largest army in the world, repelled the German aggression in the Rhineland?

Mr. Pepper. It might have. . . . I am not at all sure that France has any greater obligation to keep a would-be world conqueror in check than we have. . . .

Mr. Millikin. . . . The Senator cannot demonstrate that had we been a member of the League of Nations the course of history would have been any different.

Mr. Pepper. Mr. President, I will leave the Senator to argue with history. . . .

Thus in the development of the controversy, Senator Pepper's original assertion had been reduced to the level of a mere probability and his appeal to history had been questioned. Certainly it had been clouded by ambiguity. But his unequivocal declaration stood firmly in the record: "The last war and its victory of peace were lost . . . in this Chamber."

Later in the year, July 23, 1945, when the Charter of the United Nations came before the Senate for ratification, Senator Tom Connally opened the full-dress debate and, in the manner of Senator Pepper, called history to support his arguments. He reminded his colleagues of the treatment meted out to the League of Nations twenty-five years previously. While he refrained from ascribing World War II to the defeat of the League, he laid the blame for that defeat on the Senate; and in a warning tone lamented that "many representatives of foreign nations are still doubtful as to what the vote on the charter will be here in the Senate. They remember 1919."

Then in a florid style all his own, Senator Connally declared to the Senate that these representatives of foreign nations “know how the League of Nations was slaughtered here on the floor. Can you not still see the blood on the floor? Can you not see upon the walls the marks of the conflict that ranged [sic] here in the Chamber where the League of Nations was done to death. They fear that that same sentiment may keep the United States from ratifying this charter. Our ratification of it will instill hope into the hearts of the peoples of the earth. . . . I trust that the Senate . . . will ratify this charter by a vote so overwhelming as to carry the conviction over the earth that the United States expects to assume its obligations for the purpose of keeping them, for the purpose of living up to them, for the purpose of supporting a world organization for peace with all our spirit and with all our hearts.”

The charge that the peace at the end of World War I had been lost in the Senate was an old doctrine which had been repeated with almost endless reiteration by advocates of internationalism, at home and abroad, since the final vote of the Senate on the Treaty of Versailles in 1920.² In one form or another, during a quarter of a century, it had been proclaimed by members of Congress, publicists, educators, journalists, and radio broadcasters and reasserted on innumerable occasions as if it were an absolute truth. Often it had been narrowed in such a way as to place the responsibility not upon the Senate as a whole but upon a small group of scheming, willful, evil Republican Senators led by Henry Cabot Lodge, who has long been characterized by enemies as a bigoted, ignoble, deceitful, and dishonest politician.[^]

Indeed the thesis that a little band of Senators, mainly Republicans, mainly inspired by party malice, wrecked the peace in 1920 has appeared in a veritable flood of “literature.”[^]

2, On the nature of the Treaty of Versailles see William Bullitt, “The Tragedy of Versailles,” *Life*, March 27, 1944, p. 99. W. D. Herridge, former Canadian Minister to the United States, said that “Versailles was not a treaty of peace but a declaration of war.” Herridge, *Which Kind of Revolution?* (1943), p. 23.

Amid the plethora of such assertions it is difficult to choose the most typical document to illustrate the accusation. But from the embarrassment of records may be taken as a fair example an article by Joseph H. Baird, entitled "Will the Senate Hamper the Peace?" published in the *American Mercury* for June, 1945. This article not only stated the case of senatorial guilt in stark simplicity; it also pilloried with the customary severity the wicked minority of willful men. The author, Mr. Baird, had once been chief of the United Press Bureau in Moscow, had previously "covered" the State Department, had served as a member of the United Press in London, and had held a post of night foreign editor in New York City. With good reason it could be supposed, therefore, that Mr. Baird's reporting deserved serious consideration by the public.

Mr. Baird opened his account of senatorial obstruction by recalling the famous words of John Hay: "There will always be 34 per cent of the Senate on the blackguard side of every question." He declared that "the Senate fight over the League is too well known and its deviations are too tortuous to be outlined here"; so he ventured to summarize the long controversies and negotiations in a few words: "In February 1919, Senator Lodge told Senator Borah of Idaho, later to succeed him as chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, that 85 per cent of the Senate was for the League. He then went on to explain to Borah and to Senator Watson, Republican, of Indiana, who said that 80 per cent of the public favored the League, that adherence could be defeated by a skillful campaign of reservations. . . . As a result of endless reservations and political maneuvering, when the resolution of adherence was finally balloted upon on March 19, 1920, it failed by seven votes to obtain the necessary two-thirds majority. Forty-nine votes were cast for the League and 35 against it. Thus a plurality of fourteen Senators favored it."³

3. For the multiplicity of facts that utterly demolish this oversimplification, see the findings of Thomas A. Bailey, below, pp. 7 ff.

For the view that the leaders of the opposition to a ratification of the Treaty without reservations were petty and mean partisans, writers in 1945, such as Mr. Baird, could appeal to the authority of a person no less distinguished than President Wilson. Shortly before the final vote on the Treaty of Versailles, with reservations, was taken in the Senate, the President said to Ray Stannard Baker that the reservations demanded by the Lodge group "are not made by thoughtful men to improve the Covenant; they represent a dishonorable attempt, on the part of leaders who do not speak for the people, to escape any real responsibility, so far as the United States is concerned, for world peace in future years. They are essentially partisan political devices. If I accept them, these senators will merely offer new ones, even more humiliating. These evil men intend to destroy the League." 4

Another stark declaration of the evil men's responsibility for the second World War was made by "T. R. B.," nominally a regular correspondent for the *New Republic*, in his "Washington Notes," June 18, 1945. Without referring to the files of that journal and its own hostility to the Versailles Treaty and accompaniments, the author of the Notes named several of the "evil" men of the Senate in 1919-20: Borah, Lodge, Knox, and La Follette, for example, and then placed the terrible burden of war guilt upon them: "They had joyously hounded Woodrow Wilson to his grave. . . . They had riddled the League with reservations till its own friends couldn't support it. They had hidden behind the two-thirds rule, killed Wilson, restored Normalcy, erected tariff walls, snubbed Russia, rejected a world court, and then had the last say after all, by writing the Johnson Act. . . . And the cost was little enough; only a Second World War." Here is a succinct statement of the theory that the war woes of the terrible years from 1939 to 1945 lay on the heads of a few "dishonorable" and "evil" Senators of the United States^

A version of the formula relative to senatorial guilt for World War II made it less personal and partisan: the "cause"

4. Baker, *American Chronicle* (Charles Scribner's Sons, 1945), p. 474.

of the defeat administered to the Treaty of Versailles was the archaic and undemocratic rule in the Constitution which made the concurrence of two thirds of the Senators present necessary to the approval of a treaty. If it had not been for this two-thirds rule, if treaties could have been ratified by a mere majority of the Senate or of the House and Senate combined, the United States would have joined the League of Nations and World War II would have been warded off. As far as the theory of American responsibility is concerned, however, this version was in upshot the same as the first statement of the case: scheming Senators, mostly Republicans, took advantage of the two-thirds rule, kept the United States out of the League, and hence made it impossible for the other members of the League to stop the coming of World War II.

That the world and the peoples thereof were victimized when the Senate of the United States rejected the League of Nations is the theme of a substantial worthy Thomas A.

Bailey, *Woodrow Wilson and the Great Betrayal*,⁵ published in 1945. This volume presents a stinging bill of moral indictment; but it is no mere defense of party or cause, sustained by avoidance, emphasis, and special pleading. It was written by a scholar of high standing in the historical profession. Although Professor Bailey admits to the record solid evidence which contradicts his own thesis, he files fourteen charges of infidelity against the United States, under the head of "betrayal," an unequivocal term of accusation and guilt. The term "betrayal" stems from the same root as the word "traitor"—the Latin word *tradere*. To betray is to give up to or place in the power of an enemy a person or thing by treachery or disloyalty. Betrayal is a treacherous surrender to a foe, a violation of a trust or confidence, an abandonment of something committed to one's charge. A betrayal is commonly regarded as a human and moral act of the lowest and vilest kind.

Such an act of necessity involves two parties. The party that commits the act of betrayal is bound to the second by a solemn pledge, promise, or loyalty, which by express language or clear implication forbids the performance of, or participation in, such acts of treachery. The second party, the one that is betrayed, of right has indefeasible grounds for trusting the first party—the betrayer—and for expecting that the trust will never be forsworn, dishonored, or broken. As a prelude to his indictment under the head of “betrayal” (Chapter XXII), Professor Bailey contends that President Wilson had authority to make the commitments on behalf of the United States which were incorporated in the Treaty of Versailles, that his commitments were in harmony with his public addresses to the country and the world, and that the people had “warmly applauded or had seemingly accepted” his proposals. Such, it appears, were the elements of a solemn contract entered into by the people with President Wilson—a contract binding on the people in good conscience and in honor. If the President made any mistake in the transaction, Professor Bailey says, it was not so much in giving the pledges at Paris as in assuming that “the same high degree of wartime idealism would continue indefinitely after the signing of the peace.”

In other words, according to this particular passage in Professor Bailey’s volume, a solemn obligation in respect of world peace and an association of nations in some form was assumed by President Wilson and the American people while World War I was raging, and the President afterward made commitments at Paris in keeping with this obligation. But the American people allowed their wartime idealism to decline. They repudiated the commitments made by the President with their authorization. This they did heedlessly, for, presumably, the terms of the Versailles Treaty conformed to **the** specifications laid down in the public addresses of President Wilson which the American people had applauded during the war—conformed to the

the other powers that participated in the drafting of the Treaty agreed to this meeting of minds in the obligation undertaken by the President and the people.

Immediately after offering his brief recital of the way in which “the great betrayal” came about, Professor Bailey became cautious about fixing the blame for the defeat of the Versailles Treaty, (in the simplification he places the blame on the people—on the decline in their wartime idealism.] But at once he introduces uncertainty by saying: “whoever was at fault, the unwillingness or inability of the United States to carry through the promises made in its behalf was catastrophic”—resulted in “the great betrayal.”

This is one of the most puzzling sentences in the history of etymology, syntax, grammar, logic, and philosophy. On its face it seems to declare that *whoever was at fault* the United States was at fault, for it was unwilling to carry through the promises made by President Wilson. Yet Professor Bailey does not say just that, for he couples with the word “unwillingness” the words “or inability.” He thus destroys all the force of moral guilt inherent in the word “unwillingness,” by adding that it may have been the “inability” of the United States which led to “the great betrayal”; for inability means in this case the lack of ability, physical, mental, or moral, the lack of the power, capacity, or instrumentalities necessary “to carry through” President Wilson’s promises.

Having in fact declared uncertain the issue of *who* was at fault and having admitted that perhaps the United States was after all lacking in ability to carry out President Wilson’s promises at Paris, Professor Bailey proceeds as if the betrayer were actually known and as if the United States were the culprit. For, in Chapter XXII, he lists “the results” of “the unwillingness or inability” of the United States to fulfill the commitments made by President Wilson in the Treaty of Versailles:

1. . . . a betrayal of the League of Nations.
2. . . . a betrayal of the Treaty of Versailles.

io *American Foreign Policy in the Making*

3. . . . a betrayal of the Allies.
4. . . . a betrayal of France.
5. . . . a betrayal of Germany.
6. . . . a betrayal of liberal opinion the world
7. . . . a betrayal of American boys who had died, and American boys yet unborn.
8. . . . a betrayal of the masses everywhere.
9. . . . a betrayal of our humanitarian, missionary, and educational interests not only in Europe, but particularly in the Near
10. . . . a betrayal of the legitimate interests of American merchants, manufacturers, bankers, and
11. . . . a betrayal of America's responsibility to assume that world leadership which had been thrust upon her.
12. . . . a betrayal of the nation's plighted word and of good faith in international dealings.
13. . . . a betrayal of our clear moral obligations to finish job.
14. . . . a betrayal of the American people.

After presenting this list of "betrayals" which constitute "the great betrayal," Professor Bailey makes a generous gesture toward his country by saying, as a qualification, that the great betrayal did not "necessarily" mean that "our withdrawal was solely, or even primarily responsible for all the ills that befell Europe from 1919 to 1939." It did mean, however, he added, that the United States "cannot escape a very considerable share of the blame for what happened." Thus the amount of guilt justly ascribable to the United States is made indefinite.

And a few pages later in this volume Professor Bailey introduces more uncertainty. By joining the League of Nations, he says (p. 367), "we had very little if anything to lose . . . ; and everything to gain—possibly a preventing of so-called World War II"—just "possibly," not even "probably."

Then Professor Bailey asks a question that cuts right into

the validity of his betrayal theory: "Would the results⁶ have been essentially different if we had joined the League?" On this issue so crucial to the validity of his whole argument, Professor Bailey remarks that "conclusions here must of course be more speculative" (than in the case of whether the United States had anything to lose by joining the League of Nations). Thereupon, after confirming the speculative character of his thinking on the subject, he makes the statement: "it may legitimately be doubted whether, when the pinch came, the United States [if a member] would have provided adequate support for the League of Nations."

One explanation of the "speculative," or inconclusive, character of Professor Bailey's conclusions may lie in his findings in the twenty-one chapters which precede his Chapter XXII entitled "The Great Betrayal." In preparation for writing his volume, he had studied with meticulous care the debates on the Treaty in the Senate, articles in the press, the unpublished Woodrow Wilson papers, papers of distinguished contemporaries, and indeed a documentation impressive in its range and authenticity. On the basis of this study, he made the following positive statements:

Senator McCormick was "uncomfortably close to the truth" when he said that President Wilson had "stacked the Peace Conference with Democrats" (p. 73).

"It would have been better if he [President Wilson] had been willing to . . . compromise enough to save the pact [Versailles Treaty]" (p. 100-101).

"Wilson's physical and mental condition had a profoundly important bearing on the final defeat of the treaty" (p. 145). "It is hard to understand how Wilson could have insisted that the fourteen Lodge reservations, ten of which concerned the League only, completely nullified the whole treaty" (p. 166).

"Having made up his mind that he was right, he [President Wilson] saw evil in any other course. Personal pride and in

ti. It should be noted again that Professor Bailey called the fourteen betrayals "results" of the unwillingness or inability of the United States to join the League of Nations. Above p. 9.

grained stubbornness partially blinded him to the public weal” (p. 169).

“Some apologists for Wilson claim that if he had not collapsed he would have compromised with Lodge. Perhaps so, but there is nothing to support such a view in his public utterances, in his private papers or in his character” (p. 173).

“If he [President Wilson] told the Democrats in the Senate to vote for the treaty with the Lodge reservations, most of them undoubtedly would do so, and the two-thirds majority would be won” (p. 174).

“Senator Hitchcock . . . privately confessed to Colonel Bonsai, the day before the November vote, that *he and most of the Senate Democrats favored getting the treaty ratified ‘in almost any form’*” (p. 177).

“Wilson bluntly told Hitchcock on November 17 that the Lodge reservations were a ‘nullification’ of the treaty, and that if they came to him he would pocket the whole thing” (p. 179). “It also seems reasonably clear that by this time [November] public opinion favored either the Lodge reservations or some thing rather closely akin to them” (p. 180).

“Wilson’s communication to Hitchcock, dated November 18 . . . told the Democratic majority how they should vote, and it spelled the difference between ratification and non-ratification of the Treaty of Versailles” (p. 185).

“If they [the Democrats] had voted for the treaty with the Lodge reservations, *instead of combining with the ‘irreconcilables’*, the Senate would have approved the pact (on the first vote) 81 to 13, or with 19 votes to spare” (p. 195). [Only thirteen or fourteen Senators were “irreconcilable.”]

Important French newspapers favored a ratification of the Treaty even in spite of some of the reservations: “The powerful *Temps*, which often spoke for the Foreign Office . . . believed that the Lodge reservations merely set forth restrictions which would in practice exist anyhow” (p. 205).

Colonel House advised President Wilson that Democratic Senators be instructed to vote for ratification with reservations. “Neither of House’s two letters was answered or acknowledged” (p. 210).

December 14, 1919, President Wilson authorized an official statement that “he has *no compromise or concession of any kind*

in 'mind' but intends to place the whole responsibility on the Republican leaders of the Senate (p. 212).

In his Jackson Day letter, President Wilson declared that if “there was any doubt as to the views of the people,” the way out was “to give the next election the form of a great and solemn referendum” (p. 217).

William Jennings Bryan, on Jackson Day, branded the “solemn referendum” idea as “folly” and urged working out a compromise on the Treaty (p. 218).

“An impressive number of Democratic newspapers” supported Mr. Bryan’s proposal in favor of a compromise with the opposition (p. 221).

“An appeal from the League of Free Nations Association urged the President to accept the necessary reservations and get the treaty into operation” (p. 225).

“A committee representing twenty-six organizations, with a total membership of fifty million memorialized both the President and the Senate to compromise their differences” (p. 226).

Viscount Grey, after trying in vain to see President Wilson in Washington, published in England a powerful article in which he favored the entrance of the United States willingly with limited obligations as preferable to unwilling partnership with unlimited obligations (pp. 234-237).

Mr. Lloyd George, British Prime Minister, publicly expressed willingness to accept the United States with reservations, provided the other powers were not expressly required to agree to the conditions (p. 240).

In February, 1920, President Wilson told Senator Glass that if the Treaty was approved with the Lodge reservations he would pocket it (p. 256).

The day after the final vote on the Treaty, Senator Hitchcock wrote to President Wilson, saying that it required the “most energetic efforts” on his part to prevent a majority of Democrats from surrendering to Senator Lodge—and thus effecting ratification (p. 271).

“The evidence is convincing that Wilson wanted the issue cast into the hurly-burly of politics”—the election campaign of 1920 (p. 275).

“Minds no less acute than Wilson’s . . . denied that the Lodge reservations completely nullified the treaty” (p. 277).

"By his action, he [President Wilson] contributed powerfully to the ultimate undoing of the League, and with it the high hopes of himself and mankind for an organization to prevent World War II" (p. 277).

"Many elements entered into the legislative log jam of March, 1920. . . . No one of them was solely responsible for the pile-up. *But as the -pile-up finally developed, there was only one lumber jack who could, break it, and that was Woodrow Wilson*" (p. 278).

"Wilson gave orders that the treaty was to be killed in the Senate chamber. And there it died" (p. 281).

In dealing with the influences which may have induced in the minds of Senators a hostility to the Treaty of Versailles, Professor Bailey, however, minimizes a large amount of information respecting the "inside history" of World War I and the settlement at Paris, which reached the American public between 1918 and 1920. Most startling of all was the publication of various secret treaties and understandings entered into by the Entente Allies preparatory to the war, or in relation to the distribution of the spoils at the close of the conflict.

After the Bolsheviks came to power in Russia in 1917 they opened the hidden archives of the Tsarist regime and spread broadcast many documents which gave to the political and moral aims of the Entente Allies an aspect wholly different from that expounded in their war propaganda from 1914 to 1918. Particularly significant for its effect on opinion in the United States was the publication, in January, 1918, of certain secret treaties drawn from the Russian archives⁷ and later the dissemination of other documents bearing on the transactions of the governments with which President Wilson carried on negotiations at Paris when the terms of the Versailles Treaty and the Covenant of the League of Nations were being drafted.

Nevertheless, without carefully estimating the influence

7. In the *New York Evening Post* under the editorship of Oswald Garrison Villard.

of such revelations in arousing American hostility to the Entente Powers and the Treaty, Professor Bailey, in apportioning blame for the rejection of the League of Nations, makes the Senate carry a burden of guilt. Whatever may be the degree of responsibility he ascribes to President Wilson, Professor Bailey leaves the impression that the Senators whom the President characterized as “evil men”—especially Senator Lodge and the “bitter-enders”—are at least to be regarded as among the culprits in the “great betrayal” which brought World War II upon

In the foregoing expressions of opinion that make the responsibility for World War II in some way turn upon “obstructionists” in the Senate of the United States are exhibited both the assurance and the ambiguity that have attended the exposition of this particular thesis. For some time President Wilson attributed the obstruction to “evil men” in the Senate and this view has widely prevailed. Senator Pepper and Senator Connally located the blame *in* the Senate without naming or characterizing the Senators to be held accountable. Professor Bailey represented President Wilson as eternally right in regarding isolation as a mirage and believing that “the next war would surely drag us in”; and, while holding that the President was impolitic in methods, Professor Bailey also portrayed the Senate “oligarchy” as an activating force in “the great betrayal” which eventuated in the second World War.

CHAPTER II

The American People to Blame for World War II

A wider view of culpability in respect of the woes that be

fell the nations of the earth after 1919, involving them at length in World War II, places the blame upon the American people as a whole, upon the “public,” or upon “the country” at large. This view does not exclude from responsibility the “evil men” of the Senate, or the two-thirds rule for ratification of treaties to which the nation had clung. Indeed, all the Senators, “good” and “evil” alike, are among the offending persons covered by the all-embracing indictment of the American people as the guilty party. While the wider view of culpability takes various forms in actual statement, it generally comprises certain features which, collectively, amount to a thesis: that the American people are responsible for the foreign policy that led in effect to World War II.

Rallying to the leadership of President Wilson, as “the far sighted statesman” of his times—the thesis runs—the American people had waged World War I for the purpose of destroying German militarism, making the world safe for democracy, imposing a liberal program on backward nations,¹ realizing President Wilson’s Fourteen Points, putting a final end to war, and ushering in the age of permanent peace.

While the battles of that war were raging, the American people cheered his projects for a grand association of nations to carry out the aims of the war; and at the Paris Peace Conference the League of Nations was projected in

1, According to Ray Stannard Baker, “Wilson meant to change the world, not by changing the system, as was the proposal in Russia and by radicals in Western Europe, and ‘so shaking every foundation in order to dislodge an abuse,’ but by administering it uprightly according to traditional liberal principles of America and Great Britain and with the guarantee of a league of nations founded upon those principles.” *Woodrow Wilson and World Settlement* (Doubleday, Page & Co., 1922), II, 64.

fulfilment of the President's pledges to the American people and to all "peace-loving" nations.

xBut—the thesis continues—soon after the war the American people forgot their noble professions and resolves, let their war idealism "slump," grew weary of hearing about the woes of the world, turned selfishly to their own affairs, and sank into the mire of "isolationism."² In heroic efforts to marshal the people in support of his policy as against the "evil men" in the Senate, President Wilson toured the West in 1919. He begged the people to remember the war aims he had announced in their name. He asked them to remain faithful to the cause for which he said American soldiers had died, warned them that another world war would come if the United States rejected the League of Nations, and told them that only under the League could adequate outlets be found for American goods in foreign markets. On this tour President Wilson, worn out by his arduous labor, was overcome by a desperate illness. Disregarding his pleas and misfortune, the Senate refused to ratify the Treaty of Versailles. It is true that in 1920 the Democrats in their national convention endorsed the League of Nations and nominated two ardent supporters of the League, James M. Cox and Franklin D. Roosevelt, for President and Vice-President, respectively. But at the "solemn referendum" the American people swept the Democrats out of power in an avalanche of votes. Then, under Republican leadership, they turned to isolation with a vengeance. They remained obdurate in their narrow vision, even after the Democratic party recovered supremacy in 1935; they clung obstinately to the traditional doctrine that the United States should not become entangled in the age

2. *Isolationism* is used in this volume as meaning: Rejection of membership in the League of Nations; non-entanglement in the political controversies of Europe and Asia; non-intervention in the wars of those continents; neutrality, peace, and defense for the United States through measures appropriate to those purposes; and the pursuit of a foreign policy friendly to all nations disposed to reciprocate. An isolationist may favor the promotion of good will and peace among nations by any and all measures compatible with non-entanglement in any association of nations empowered to designate "aggressors" and bring engines of sanction and coercion into action against them.

long quarrels of Europe and Asia; they selfishly wanted peace, neutrality, and defense for the United States in a war ring world.

In vain—the thesis concluded—did Franklin D. Roosevelt, after he became President in 1933, warn the American people that peace could be maintained only by collective action of “peace-loving nations,” by putting a “quarantine” on aggressors. In vain did he tell them that the United States could not defend itself against victorious aggressors if Great Britain fell. In vain did he beseech Congress for adequate measures of defense against aggressors. The American people remained adamant. Congress “stifled” the President’s calls for preparedness. Even after Hitler’s hordes had overrun France in 1940, the people still demanded peace for the United States. For years the people blocked President Roosevelt and the Secretary of State, Cordell Hull, in their efforts to enforce a policy designed to restrain aggressors and prevent outbreaks of war in Europe and Asia. The people insisted on holding fast to their “ignorance,” “smugness,” “indifference,” and “isolationism,” until Japanese bombs blasted Pearl Harbor on December 7, 1941. Not until then did the American people see that President Roosevelt had been right from the beginning, rush in a solid body to the support of the war, and display a willingness to assume the moral responsibility to the whole world which they had surrendered and spumed almost immediately after World War I.

The widening of responsibility from the “evil men” in the Senate to include the people as a whole began before the Senate had acted on the Versailles Treaty. As early as the autumn of 1919 experienced editors in New York City informed Ray Stannard Baker, President Wilson’s confidant and aide, that “the American people were ‘fed up’ on the Peace Conference; they didn’t want to be bothered any more with the woes of Europe.”³

Apparently President Wilson himself finally came to the conclusion that it was the people, not merely the “evil men”

3. Baker, *American Chronicle*, p. 463.

in the Senate, who actually defeated the ratification of the Versailles Treaty at the end of World War I. According to a statement given to the press in May, 1945, by his daughter, Mrs. Eleanor Wilson McAdoo, Mr. Wilson said within his family circle a short time before his death in 1924: "It was right that the United States did not join the League of Nations. . . . I've been thinking about this for a long time. If we had joined the League when I asked for it, it would have been a great personal victory. But it would not have worked, because deep down in their hearts the American people didn't really believe in it. The time will come when this country will join such a league because they will know that it has to be. And then and then only will it work." 4

From year to year after 1920 the thesis of popular responsibility in the United States for the world's woes and wars was set forth in articles, books, pamphlets, and leaflets. Illustrations of it were as thick as autumn leaves in the literature of the period from 1920 to 1945. Professors, preachers, editors, publicists, columnists, and propagandists repeated it with a determination that increased in intensity as World War II approached and rose to fury after war broke in 1939.

The thesis of popular ignorance and responsibility was incisively presented many times, for instance, in the voluminous writings of Frederick L. Schuman, Woodrow Wilson Professor of Government at Williams College. In the professor's opinion it was the American people, or the "public," who demanded neutrality legislation and estopped President Roosevelt from leading or joining Great Britain, France, and Russia in a movement for "collective security" that would have prevented the war in Europe.

Speaking early in 1936 of the neutrality legislation then pending, in the *Nation*, February 12, 1936, Professor Schuman described it as "one part lunacy, one part stupidity, and one part criminal ignorance of diplomatic and economic realities." The bill in question as slightly modified passed the House on February 17, 1936, by a vote of 353 to 27. In favor

4. *New York World-Telegram*, May 8, 1945.

of the measure were 273 Democrats, 78 Republicans, and 2 Farm-Laborites; opposing were 11 Democrats, 9 Republicans, and 7 Progressives; the Senate passed the bill the following day without a record vote; and the President signed it on February 28. Judging by the action of Congress it is evident that “lunacy,” “stupidity,” and “criminal ignorance”—to use Professor Schuman’s epithets—were widespread among representatives of the people in the Government of the United States.⁸

Writing after the war had broken out in Europe in 1939, while President Roosevelt was assuring the American people that every effort of the Government would be directed to keeping the United States out of the war, Professor Schuman was again harsh in characterizing the American public and placing on the American people the failure to check the aggressors. In his *Night over Europe*, published early in 1941, the professor said: “No one knew better than he [President Roosevelt in 1940] that passive defense of the United States or of the ‘Western Hemisphere’ would become a strategic impossibility, mathematically certain to insure defeat, the moment that Britain surrendered.” Why was it that President Roosevelt “could say none of these things openly lest he be accused of ‘war mongering’?” The professor answered in language not quite so mathematical: President Roosevelt “knew that the public would flee, as from the devil, from any suggestion of belligerent participation [in the war], and that a motley crowd of pacifists, appeasers, isolationists, enemy agents, and muddleheads would seize upon his every move to impede the march of the aggressors as a basis for charging him with aiming at dictatorship and scheming to send American boys to die on foreign soil.”⁵⁶

While Professor Schuman castigated the American public for adhering to a foreign policy of isolation and non intervention, he did not entirely exculpate President Roose-

5. Vote in *American Year Book* (1936), p. 27. Charles A. Beard, *The Devil Theory of War* (Vanguard Press, 1936), p. 112.

6. *Night over Europe* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1941), p. 553.

velt. On the contrary he described the President, then facing an election campaign, as “a leader who preferred to follow his followers, as a prospective candidate who felt obliged to march behind the electorate rather than in front of it.”⁷ But this characterization of the President as less than ingenuous in no way softened Professor Schuman’s condemnation of the American people as guilty of criminal ignorance in matters of foreign policy.⁸

Another exposition of the popular-responsibility thesis by a distinguished citizen was set forth in an article entitled “America’s Faith—a Call for Revival,” published in the *New York Times Sunday Magazine* on July 18, 1943. The author of the exposition was Robert N. Wilkin, judge of the district court of the United States in northern Ohio. A loyal Democrat, appointed to his post by President Roosevelt in June, 1939, Judge Wilkin could write on foreign policy with warm feeling and in a tone of authority.

After placing “the chief responsibility for our nation’s default” in 1919-20 on the senatorial minority and after ascribing its opposition to animosity toward Woodrow Wilson, Judge Wilkin represented President Wilson as finally betrayed by the people. That “great intellect” had voiced the aspirations of humanity but could not maintain “the unity of his own people.” “That courageous and patient soul who had gained the acceptance of our faith from all the rest of the world⁹ had to witness the loss of that faith at home.” The President believed that “the people’s relapse would be followed by a revival.” Yet, declared Judge Wilkin, “the American people cannot be absolved from the doom of his prophecy.”

Having brought the American people to book and con-

7. *Ibid.*

8. For Professor Schuman’s later views and doubts, see “The Dilemma of the Peace-Seekers,” *American Political Science Review*, XXXIX (February, 1944), 2-30.

9. For what “the rest of the world” demanded at the hands of President Wilson, see Baker, *op. cit.*, pp. 324, 330, 331, 336, 350, 354, 363, 365, 372, 398, 403, 411, 413, 415, 421, 423.

victed them of a terrible sin against the aspirations of all humanity, Judge Wilkin asked how "we" could be redeemed. "What can we do to rectify our mistakes and minimize the consequences of our error? What retribution can we offer for the wrongs we have done? What can we do to be saved?"

Judge Wilkin offered his plan of salvation: "We must confess and repent. . . . There can be no spiritual health or strength in us until we are cleansed of our wilful error." The people must support measures in Congress looking to the establishment of a new world organization; they must demonstrate to American soldiers that their hopes are not in vain, "that we have forestalled another relapse into isolationism; that we have solemnly consecrated ourselves to the fulfilment of their sacrifice. . . . If we will give up our national irresponsibility and assume our share of international responsibility . . . we will be able to fill, with gratification to our selves and benefit to the world, the position to which we have been deputized by destiny."

The thesis of American responsibility for wrecking the League of Nations was partly if not fully underwritten by Carlton J. H. Hayes, the American Ambassador to Spain, in his *Wartime Mission to Spain, 1942-1945*,¹⁰ published late in 1945. On the first page of this volume Mr. Hayes says: "I

was henceforth [after 1918] a convinced and outspoken advocate of the League of Nations and of any agency or measure which might forward the cause of collective security and lessen the danger of another World War in which many more millions of Americans were sure to be involved. It seemed to me then, and it still does, that we who were decried in the partisan strife of 1920 as 'idealists' and 'dreamers' were far more realistic than those 'realists' who wrecked the League of Nations and pursued narrowly nationalist ends. Unfortunately for the present generation, there proved to be more 'realists' in those days than 'idealists.' "

Here in a brief passage are the presuppositions so com-

10. Published by The Macmillan Company.

monly taken for granted without analysis, namely, that the contest in the United States over the League of Nations was a “partisan” strife; that it was a struggle between idealists who were realists and alleged realists who did not know what they were doing; and that the United States was “sure” to be involved in the next war, in other words, fated to be involved in that war, as if it made no difference what policy other than internationalism was pursued by the Government of the United States. Leaving aside the problem of ontology implicit in the Ambassador’s assumptions as to realists and idealists and as to fate, here also is the clear intimation that American partisans, presumably Republicans on the whole, “wrecked the League of Nations” and were in some measure at least responsible for World War II.¹¹

One of the accompaniments of the thesis that the United States or the American people were responsible for World War II is the proposition, often associated with it, to the effect that the same American people who betrayed their responsibility to the world in 1920 or thereabouts were and still are capable of asserting superior moral leadership. Senator Pepper gave voice to this idea when he laid the blame for World War II on the Senate of the United States. In an address before the New York City College alumni on November 17, 1945, Abe Fortas, Under-Secretary of the Department of the Interior, declared: “We are the one nation in the world that can successfully assert the moral leadership necessary to guide the world to peace and

11. In respect of his own party views, Mr. Hayes wrote, on p. 7: “though I had voted for him [Mr. Roosevelt] in 1932 and 1936 and again in 1940, I had never taken an active part in politics, and my adherence to the Democratic party had been more ‘independent’ than regular. At no time then or afterwards did he or any other official of our Government ask me about my ‘politics.’”

12. *New York Times*, November 18, 1945. Mr. Fortas also warned his auditors that there was danger of another world war and added: “The burning question before us is whether we have the ability ... to change the world sufficiently to avoid this disaster. The answer is so largely dependent upon the people of the United States that every one of us shares an immediate and compelling responsibility.” About the same time Dr. Max Lerner, formerly a professor in Williams College, likewise indicated the way for exculpating Russia

An official document that in effect lent support to the thesis of popular responsibility for World War II, without mentioning it, was issued in March, 1942. It was presented in the Senate by John H. Overton, of Louisiana, and printed as Senate Document Number 188. The volume is entitled *Development of United States Foreign Policy* and embraces "Addresses and Messages of Franklin D. Roosevelt compiled from official sources, intended to present the chronological development of the foreign policy of the United States from the announcement of the Good Neighbor Policy in 1933, including the War Declarations." Sixty-nine pages of the volume are given to addresses from 1933 to 1940 inclusive, and the remainder of the pages (70-150) to the years 1940 and 1941.

This official collection of pronouncements which purports to represent the foreign policy advocated by President Roosevelt from 1933 to 1942 contains only selected addresses and messages. With few exceptions, such as the Chautauqua speech of August 14, 1936, the selections showed consistency in President Roosevelt's foreign policy and revealed him as pursuing a substantially unbroken course from 1933 to 1942. The editor of the volume, whose name does not appear on the title page, not only confined the selections almost entirely to official messages and addresses; he omitted all of President Roosevelt's campaign speeches in which the President's foreign policy was repeatedly proclaimed to the people, from 1932, when he was seeking the Democratic nomination, to and including his campaign speeches of 1940; unless the Chautauqua address of 1936 be characterized as a campaign speech. In net result this exercise of the selective principle foreshadowed other statements of the thesis of popular responsibility, semi-official and official, which were to follow the publication of Senate Document Number 188.

and putting the blame for coming troubles and wars on the American people. Appealing to workers, farmers, businessmen, scientists, teachers, preachers, fathers and mothers, Dr. Lerner said on November 18, 1945: "The stakes are yours. The victims will be yours. The final decisions must be yours." *PM*, Sunday, November 18, 1945, p. 3.

The verdict that the American people, or at least a dominant portion of them, were afflicted with smugness and ignorance in matters of foreign policy, hampered President Roosevelt in pursuing his own policy, and were responsible for the catastrophe that marked the opening of the all-out war for Americans at Pearl Harbor was given semi-official confirmation by Forrest Davis and Ernest K. Lindley in their volume, *How War Came: An American White Paper*, published in the summer of 1942. This work, if not officially inspired in a strict sense, was written by two well-known journalists who had easy access to the White House and the State Department.

In fact, both Mr. Davis and Mr. Lindley had what was called by reporters “an inside track” with the Roosevelt Administration. Mr. Lindley in particular had long been in sympathy with New Deal policies and had written extensively in defense of them even while he was connected with an opposition newspaper. His work of this nature had been duly appreciated by President Roosevelt. Although, like many New Dealers, Mr. Lindley had once been actively opposed to foreign entanglements and had favored concentration on domestic measures of reform, he later changed his mind and became a vigorous exponent of collective security. As an acknowledged supporter of the Administration’s foreign and domestic policies, Mr. Lindley was in a strategic position to secure inside information on the views and designs of the Executive Department.

The subtitle of the Davis and Lindley volume, *An American White Paper*, was so framed as to convey the impression that it had at least a kind of official *imprimatur*; for the words “White Paper” mean, in diplomatic usage, a government document containing selected papers on foreign affairs issued presumably for the information of the public. Hence in the case of *How War Came* the clear implication was that it constituted an official account of the war’s origins.

It is true that the authors in their Foreword declared that the book was “unofficial” and that they alone were “account

able.” But other statements in the Foreword, innumerable passages in the book, advertisements of the work, and various circumstances connected with its preparation and publication demonstrated that the volume was more than an “unofficial” report by two journalists who had at their command only the ordinary information available to all their colleagues in the profession.

On the jacket of the book the publishers were permitted to say: “This book tells the inside story of American foreign policy from the fall of France to the attack on Pearl Harbor.

. . . Never has such a job been reported in such intimate detail, so soon, and with such authority. *How War Came* abounds in news scoops and off-the-record revelations. It tells how President Roosevelt negotiated the destroyer-for-bases deal with Ambassador Lothian . . . tells who wrote which phrase in the Atlantic Charter and gives the historic circumstances in colorful and intimate detail. It discloses that Churchill, not Roosevelt, favored an immediate break with Japan. It explains why the Germans called Admiral Leahy the real ruler of unoccupied France. It lifts the veil on the Kurusu-Nomura conferences with Secretary Hull. . . .”

In an advertisement in the *New York Times*, August 25, 1942, the publishers of the Lindley-Davis volume said: “This book is a report to the American people, based on official records and the confidences of the men who made and are making American history. It is the first uncensored story of what has been going on in our own country and in our government from the fall of France to Pearl Harbor.”

In their American White Paper, Davis and Lindley emphatically presented the view that President Roosevelt, in 1940 and 1941, was committed to a foreign policy at variance with the policy to which the American people in general were committed. The conclusions of the authors in this respect may be summarized in the following statements:

1. President Roosevelt believed that a strong policy in the

period under consideration, but was obstructed in his proceedings by the sentiments of neutrality, peace, and isolationism all but universally cherished by the American people (p. 317).

2. The American people were afflicted by a “trancelike unawareness of peril” in 1941; and their attitude toward the Japanese peril in particular “may be attributed to a national sense of sufficiency, a smugness based on a continental state of mind, an indifference to and ignorance of the world about us” (p. 316). Davis and Lindley attributed this attitude in part to the “simple, kindly” and “optimistic” nature of the American people, given to ignoring “evil”; but they put smugness and ignorance in their catalogue of American characteristics.

3. Furthermore, Davis and Lindley said, during the pre war months the isolationists “helped to disarm the American people psychologically.” Forces “personified by Wheeler and Lindbergh”—two marked men on the White House list—“dinned the public’s ears with assurances of our immunity from danger” (p. 317).

4. It might have been better if “we” had “gone to war earlier, on our own volition,” instead of waiting for “the physical attack” (p. 317).

Here, then, in *How War Came*, is what purports to be the official view of President Roosevelt’s Administration on responsibility for the making of foreign policy and on war guilt: the American people in their “smugness” and “ignorance” insisted on a policy of peace and neutrality, and so prevented the President from effectively pursuing the correct line of strong action in conjunction with other powers arrayed against “aggressors,” until the Japanese attacked Pearl Harbor. In other words, the President was convinced that collaborative intervention in the conflict of Europe and Asia was the right policy but the American people, with contemptible stubbornness, clung to an opposite doctrine—non intervention and neutrality despite the wars raging in Europe **and Asia**.

The Davis and Lindley formulation of the theory that the American people's sentiments of isolation hampered President Roosevelt in the correct conduct of foreign affairs was given a certain official confirmation by the State Department, with caution and circumspection, in its edition of *Peace and War: United States Foreign Policy, 1931-1941*, published in July, 1943, Chapter I, entitled "The Fateful Decade."

In its statement the Department declared that, while the powers of the President and Secretary of State over foreign affairs are very great, they are nevertheless constrained by public opinion:

The conduct of the foreign relations of the United States is a function of the President, acting usually through the Secretary of State. The powers of the Executive in this field are very broad and sweeping. Yet the President and the Secretary of State have by no means entire freedom in matters of foreign policy. . . . They must closely approximate the prevailing views of the country.

Although the State Department did not, like Davis and Lindley, speak scornfully of American "ignorance of the world about us," it referred to the superiority of the Executive in matters of knowledge and to the duty of the President and Secretary of State to explain to the public "the forces at work." It said:

In the history of our country situations have arisen in which the Executive, with wide access to many sources of information from abroad, has known of or foreseen developments in foreign relations of which the public had not yet become aware. In such cases the President and the Secretary of State have exercised such executive powers as they possess and have endeavored to explain to the public the forces at work and the probable course of events and to outline the policies which need be pursued in the best interest of the United States. In such cases, if and as legislation has been needed, the executive branch of the

soon as practicable asked of the Congress legislation to make possible the pursuit of the proposed policies.¹³

During a large part of the period between 1931 and 1941, the State Department revealed, the President and the Secretary of State differed from the thesis respecting foreign affairs that was accepted by “much of public opinion,” and held views relative to foreign policy in conflict with this popular thesis:

During a large part of the period with which this volume deals [1931—41], much of public opinion in this country did not accept the thesis that a European war could vitally affect the security of the United States or that an attack on the United States by any of the Axis powers was possible. In this respect it differed from the President and the Secretary of State, who early became convinced that the aggressive policies of the Axis powers were directed toward an ultimate attack on the United States and that, therefore, our foreign relations should be so conducted as to give all possible support to the nations endeavoring to check the march of Axis aggression.

Our foreign policy during the decade under consideration necessarily had to move within the framework of a gradual evolution of public opinion in the United States away from the idea of isolation expressed in “neutrality” legislation and toward realization that the Axis design was a plan of world conquest in which the United States was intended to be a certain, though perhaps ultimate, victim, and that our primary policy therefore must be defense against actual and mounting danger. This was an important factor influencing the conduct of our foreign relations. Of determining importance also was another factor, namely, that in many nations outside the United States a similar complacency of view had originally prevailed and likewise was undergoing a gradual modification.

13. The President and the Secretary did not call for an abrogation of the Neutrality Act in principle when, in 1939, they asked for the repeal of the clauses laying an embargo on the export of munitions. On the contrary they both agreed with the opposition that the maintenance of neutrality was the great objective. They contended then that the supreme issue was merely one of the *method* most likely to achieve the objective of neutrality. See below, Chap. IX.

The pages which follow [of text and documents] show the slow march of the United States from an attitude of illusory aloofness toward world-wide forces endangering America to a position in the forefront of the United Nations that are making common cause against an attempt at world conquest unparalleled alike in boldness of conception and in brutality of operation.¹⁴

The interpretation as to the course of foreign affairs and policies between 1931 and 1941 thus given by the State Department is difficult to analyze in concrete terms of time (years, days, and moments) and of relevant facts and events which occurred in that decade. Yet a microscopic examination of the passages quoted above from the State Department's explanation and of the several sentences which make up the paragraphs yields some definite conclusions, while leaving unanswered many queries immediately pertinent to what the Department said.

The State Department's exposition declared that the President and Secretary of State were, in some measure, controlled in the conduct of foreign affairs by public opinion: "They must closely approximate the prevailing views of the country." The word "country" is abstract. The country holds no views: persons hold views—American people. The views which the President and Secretary had to approximate were "prevailing views," that is, views held by so many people, or by so many people of noteworthy influence, that the President and Secretary felt bound to "approximate" the said views.

In this sentence the President and Secretary are represented as if standing outside the public whose views they must approximate in conducting foreign affairs. Since the word "approximate" means "approach" or "nearly conform to," the sentence is to be understood as stating that the President and Secretary had some freedom of action in forming foreign policies and maneuvering under them, but not much.

14. *Peace and War*, pp. 2-3.

Or to put it in another way, their conduct of foreign affairs, whatever their own views, was in the main or on the whole determined by views prevailing among American people—views that came into being by some process beyond the control of the President and the Secretary.

In the third paragraph quoted above the State Department says that during “a large part of the period” from 1931 to 1941 “much of public opinion” in the United States accepted a “thesis” of foreign affairs which was not held by the President and the Secretary of State.

What was the thesis with regard to which much of public opinion differed from that of the President and the Secretary? Summarily, the thesis was this: a European war could not “vitally affect” the security of the United States and an attack on the United States by any of the Axis Powers was impossible.

It would be difficult to prove by an examination of the available evidences of public opinion from 1931 to 1941 that this was a correct formulation of the thesis held by “much of public opinion” against the view of the President and the Secretary of State; but the formulation by the State Department must be taken as it stands, as the State Department’s formulation.

Some other questions are immediately pertinent. Where among the available evidences of public opinion was this conviction as to immunity from danger of European war impacts on the United States so frequently proclaimed that it had to be accepted as truly or even fairly representative? Who among the people furnished much of the public opinion in support of the conception of the war’s meaning for the United States? What Senators and Representatives, what party platforms, what journals of opinion, what makers of opinion expounded the foreign policy of “isolation” from which the President and the Secretary dissented or began to dissent “early” in their official careers? In short who joined issue with the President and the Secretary over this “thesis”?

The State Department proffers no answer. Nor does it indicate by what process of inquiry, analysis, and documentation it arrived at its statement of the thesis.

This “thesis,” however judged as a statement of fact, evidently did not form the whole of the issue over which much of public opinion differed from the President and the Secretary of State. For in the next paragraph the State Department makes it clear that its first statement of the “thesis” was not entirely comprehensive. In that next paragraph it says: “our foreign policy” during the period, as shaped by the President and the Secretary, “necessarily had to move within the framework of a gradual evolution of public opinion in the United States away from the idea of isolation expressed in ‘neutrality’ legislation.”

It would seem, then, that the difference between “much of the public opinion” and the official policy of the President and the Secretary was over the idea of isolation or neutrality; for the purpose of the neutrality legislation was to “isolate the United States from war,” to preserve the neutrality of the United States in case of war. Therefore it must be inferred that what the President and the Secretary of State had to do in shaping foreign policy was to move gradually away from isolation and neutrality in an opposite direction.

The language of the State Department’s explanation yields with difficulty to the tests of etymology, philology, and grammar, but it appears to say that “early,” some time in advance of much of public opinion, the President and the Secretary privately came to the conclusion that isolation or neutrality for the United States was incompatible with “the best interest of the United States”¹⁶ and that some policy other than isolation or neutrality was desirable and necessary.

15. For an attempt to discover the meaning of “interest” as used in the diplomatic language of the United States from early times, see Charles A. Beard, *The Idea of National Interest* (The Macmillan Company, 1934). This study, which occupied about a year and a half, was made with the collaboration of two competent investigators, George H. E. Smith and John D. Lewis, with valuable assistance from experts in the Government of the United States. What the State Department meant by “best interest” of the United States

What was that other policy which the President and the Secretary “early” decided was in the best interest of the United States? Judging by the State Department’s exposition it consisted of two features: (1) the President and the Secretary “early became convinced that the aggressive policies of the Axis Powers were directed toward an ultimate attack on the United States and that, therefore, our foreign relations should be so conducted as to give all possible support to the nations endeavoring to check the march of Axis aggression”; and (2) that our primary policy . . . must be defense against mounting “danger” and must take the form of a “slow march . . . to a position in the forefront of the United Nations that are [1943] making common cause against an attempt at world conquest” by the Axis governments.

In sum and substance, assuming that all the sentences of its exposition have meaning, the State Department says: [“the President and the State Department “early” became convinced that the isolationism represented by neutrality legislation would have to be discarded; that “all possible support” would have to be given to the powers aligned against one or more Axis governments; and that the United States would have to take a position at the forefront of the nations engaged in conflict with one or more Axis governments. For, “all possible support” necessarily involves measures of war as well as measures short of war, and taking a position at the forefront of nations at war necessarily involves going to war.¹⁶

[In any event, it would appear from the State Department’s explanation, at some point in time between 1933 and 1941 President Roosevelt and Secretary Hull reached a great decision; namely that the policy of isolation, neutrality, and non-intervention in European-and Asiatic conflicts must be

by which the President and the Secretary learned that isolation or neutrality **was** not in the best interest of the United States set forth anywhere explicitly In that volume.

16. If the statement of the State Department does not mean this, then just

discarded and an opposite policy pursued by the Government of the United States, despite "much of public opinion" in the country arrayed against this policy. When was this great, indeed revolutionary, decision reached by the President and Secretary Hull? The State Department merely says the decision was reached "early." How early? In 1934, 1935, 1936, 1937, 1938, 1939, or 1940? As to the exact year, or even the approximate time, the State Department's exposition gives no hint.

On what grounds was this decision reached at some time during the period in question? The State Department provides its answers: [the Executive had access to information from abroad through special sources and thus had knowledge of developments with which the public was unacquainted[^]

But the public, according to the State Department's report to the nation, was not kept in ignorance of the course of affairs abroad which warranted a reversal of the previous policy—neutrality, non-intervention, and peace for the United States—in favor of a different, or opposite, policy. On the contrary, to use its own words: "In such cases [of special knowledge pertaining to foreign affairs] the President and the Secretary of State . . . have endeavored to explain to the public the forces at work and the probable course of events and to outline the policies which need be pursued in the best interest of the United States."

[^]Taking these words as commonly understood, the President and the Secretary of State endeavored to explain to the people the nature of affairs abroad which called for a reversal of the foreign policy, then generally held to be sound, and endeavored to outline to the people the other policy which they deemed it necessary to carry out in the best interest of the United States. This version of the controversy is clear and intelligible. The only pertinent question left unanswered is: When and in what public documents did the President and the Secretary "outline" to the people the particular foreign policy upon which they had decided?

ptice justificatif appeared in 1943, President Harry S. Truman, more tersely, more bluntly, confirmed the thesis of popular responsibility for adherence to the wrong foreign policy prior to December 7, 1941. This confirmation he made at a press and radio conference on August 30, 1945.¹⁷ The immediate occasion of his remarks on this subject was a discussion of the reports on the Pearl Harbor catastrophe issued by the War and Navy Boards during the previous day, August 29, 1945; but his statement was broad in scope. It ran as follows in full:

I have read it [the Pearl Harbor reports] very carefully, and I came to the conclusion that the whole thing is the result of the policy which the country itself pursued.

The country was not ready for preparedness.

[Every time the President made an effort to get a preparedness program through the Congress, it was stifled.¹⁸]

Whenever the President made a statement about the necessity of preparedness, he was vilified for doing it.

I think the country is as much to blame as any individual in this final situation that developed in Pearl Harbor.

Terse and blunt though his statement was, President Truman exhibited doubts in his own mind as to where the war guilt lay. His first sentence makes "the whole thing . . . the result of the policy which the country itself pursued," but his last sentence apparently divides responsibility: "I think the country is as much to blame as any individual in this final situation that developed in Pearl Harbor." Even so, taken in connection with the exposition of foreign policy given in *How War Came* by Davis and Lindley and in *Peace and War* by the State Department, President Truman's statement conforms to the thesis of popular responsibility for the course of affairs that eventuated in war.¹⁹

17. Official White House "Immediate Release," dated August 30, 1945. Paragraphing supplied in the above quotation for emphasis.

18. See Appendix to this Chapter.

19. On an earlier occasion Mr. Truman had said: "I am just as sure as I can be that this World War is the result of the 1919-1920 isolationist attitude."

Appendix to Chapter 11

President Truman's statement that "Every time the President made an effort to get a preparedness program through Congress, it was stifled," deserves technical consideration here. It is true that in loose conceptions of public affairs foreign policy is often treated as standing apart from "preparedness," from the appropriations of Congress for military and naval purposes; but in fact foreign policy and preparedness are inseparably linked in any wise and efficient administration of the national government. Foreign policy, whatever its nature, bears an intimate relation to the military force that can be brought to support it; and expenditures for military and naval purposes are in themselves, if rationally determined, expressions of actual or potential foreign policy.

In the financial practices of the United States Government the regular proposals for preparedness, for military and naval expenditures, are formulated in detail by the War Department and the Navy Department respectively, often in consultation with the President. These formulations are reviewed, approved, or modified by the Bureau of the Budget under the immediate direction of the President; and the final results in the form of "estimates" for military and naval appropriations are transmitted to Congress by the President in a regular message or in supplementary messages in case of special requests to Congress. These "estimates" from the President's office are used as the basis for "appropriations" by Congress, which may increase or decrease the amount of the expenditures proposed in the Executive's "estimates."

The "estimates" for military and naval expenditures for each year, therefore, represent the President's "preparedness program" at the time; and the actual "appropriations" by Congress for such expenditures show whether or how far Congress "stifled" the President's particular "preparedness program."

Both the estimates and the appropriations are matters of public record in the official documents of the United States. Thus in disputable mathematical data are at hand for testing the accuracy of President Truman's declaration that "Every time the President made an effort to get a preparedness program through Congress, it was stifled."

The essential facts bearing on President Truman's allegation

are set forth below in a table which was compiled by the Legislative Reference Library in the Library of Congress. In column 4 appear the estimates for military and naval expenditures presented to the session of the Congress indicated in column 1; and in column 6 are given the appropriations made by Congress after its consideration of the estimates. A comparison of the figures in these two columns shows how much Congress in its actual appropriations decreased or increased the amounts requested in the Executive estimates.

During five of the eight years under review Congress failed to grant to the President all the money he requested for preparedness but in no year was the reduction so drastic as to "stifle" his preparedness program.²⁰ In three of the eight years Congress appropriated more money than was requested in the Executive estimates. And in the grand totals for the eight years, it is evident, Congress exceeded Executive estimates by \$1,874,513,033. In deed as war approached Congress became more lavish than the President in conceiving the needs of preparedness. At all events the figures in gross and detail show that President Truman's statement on August 30, 1945, was lacking in the accuracy that becomes a declaration by the President of the United States, at all events in denouncing Congress, a coordinate branch of the national government.

A special incident often associated with the alleged congressional "stifling" of President Roosevelt's preparedness proposals involved a scheme to fortify Guam, that came up early in 1939 and has frequently been cited as an example of the way in which Congress refused to heed the President's requests for additional military and naval appropriations in the interest of national defense. It was said at the time and later that President Roosevelt actually called for the fortification of Guam. But records of his press conference in January, 1939, dispose of that contention.

Asked at his conference on January 17, 1939, about a report from Tokyo to the effect that the Japanese fleet would smash the American fleet if an attempt was made to fortify Guam, the President said: "Has an appropriation been asked of this

10. In some cases there were legitimate grounds for differences of opinion as to the need and utility of specific items in the list of requests, particularly when the Navy Department had not started the construction of ships already authorized and provided for in appropriations previously made.

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for the fortification of Guam? Answer yes or no. Let's stick to facts and brass tacks. . . . When the Navy goes up on the Hill, I will be able to say whether an appropriation is to be requested."

At a press conference three days later, January 20, 1939, the President was asked to say whether he favored the appropriation of \$5,000,000 for the fortification of Guam. According to a stenographic record, he "turned back the question to inquire whether it had been proposed to 'fortify' the island and explained that the money was largely for dredging the harbor." He then explained to the reporters the fundamental difference between an "authorization" by Congress and an "appropriation." Asked whether there need be any confusion in anyone's mind as to where he stood on the proposed fortification of Guam, the President said: "I don't think there is any confusion; I am in favor of deepening the harbor at Guam. . . ." Asked whether he favored the other appropriations for Guam including a million dollars for a landing-field improvement and the same amount for barracks, the President said he favored the whole appropriation because the barracks were in bad shape and were inadequate to house the small number of marines who were sitting on the islands. In other words Congress was not called upon by President Roosevelt in January, 1939, to appropriate money for the *fortification* of Guam.

It is fair to say that President Truman later changed his mind about the way Congress stifled President Roosevelt's preparedness programs. August 30, 1945, he said: "Every time the President made an effort to get a preparedness program through Congress, it was stifled." In his Jackson day address, March 23, 1946,

President Truman said: "At that time [before the United States went to war], our isolationists were still debating, and *almost* defeating, *most* efforts of Democratic leaders to improve the national defenses." (Italics supplied.) *Congressional Record*, March 25, 1946, p. A1682.

According to this version, the isolationists almost, but not quite, defeated, not all but most of the preparedness measures advanced by Democratic leaders. It would seem that President Roosevelt's preparedness program was not stifled every time, but *almost* defeated in *most* cases, that is, not defeated or stifled. So, at least it appears in President Truman's latest redaction of

CHAPTER III

Problems Posed by Charges of War Guilt

Whether the guilt of bringing on the second World War was in fact attributable to the "evil men" in the Senate, to the "undemocratic" provision of the Constitution which requires a two-thirds vote in the Senate for the ratification of treaties, to the refusal of President Wilson to accept reservations to the proposed Treaty of Versailles, to his resolve to make the matter of ratification a partisan issue, to the "ignorant" and "smug" adherents of isolationism among the people at large, to "much of public opinion" which opposed renewed entanglements in European and Asiatic quarrels, to the "country," to the "United States," or to "America," a multiplicity of charges certainly lodged the culpability somewhere in the United States after 1919.

There is a conjuncture of allegations relative to the making of foreign policy and the conduct of government unparalleled in the history of great nations: a multitude of people within a great society ascribe to that society or to some persons, some things, or some events in that society the responsibility for bringing on a world war. Being an unparalleled historic phenomenon intimately related to the fate and fortunes of the American Republic among the nations of the earth, it presents to American citizens a question of origins and meanings with intellectual and moral ramifications that run to the very roots of constitutional government. How did it happen, how could it happen, that so many American citizens looked homeward for the sources of this evil doing? How did it happen, how could it happen that they fomented or accepted a thesis which, in upshot, acquitted foreign nations of guilt, put the burden on or in the United States, and set the American people at variance with their own representative government? Here is posed a primary problem in

history and political science that calls for a searching examination, if the matter of how we are governed under the Constitution continues to deserve consideration.

Owing to the profusion and, in some instances the vagueness, of the charges involved in the indictment, it is difficult to present the thesis with precision. The matter is further complicated by the introduction of partisan interpretations into the allocation of guilt. For example, Walter Johnson, historian of the battle against isolationism, says: "The Republican party during the interval between the two wars was predominately isolationist. A few notable exceptions, like Secretary of State Stimson, Elihu Root, Nicholas Murray Butler, and William Allen White, were internationalists. . . . However, the isolationist attitude of such men as William E. Borah dominated the Republican party. When the Democratic party came back into power in 1933, it was still the party of Wilsonian internationalism. From 1933 to 1939 the United States Government followed a policy of attempting to improve international relations and thus prevent the collapse of world peace. . . . President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Secretary of State Cordell Hull were avowed internationalists. . . ."¹

Another difficulty encountered in efforts to formulate the thesis with precision is due to the fact that many critics, who located the responsibility for World War II in the United States, at the same time brought charges of guilt against the "aggressors," namely, Germany, Italy, and Japan. It was these offenders, they said, who first disturbed the peace of the world after 1919; while the overwhelming majority of nations were in fact "peace loving" all along. If, then, a share of the war guilt must be assigned in truth to Hitler, Mussolini, and Hirohito, the whole responsibility for the second World War can scarcely be placed on or in the United

1. *The Battle against Isolation*, pp. 10 ff. On the jacket of Mr. Johnson's book, published by the University of Chicago Press (1944), the following judgment is expressed: "Isolationism, which here stands condemned by its own lies, must not have another chance."

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